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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to give partner states of the European Training Foundation material to help them assess the potential value of targets as a tool for reform. It begins with a definition of terms and a brief statement of the potential benefits of target setting. The 10 potential benefits are as follows: provide a focus for planning and action; test the realism of aims and objectives; motivate people to improve performance; harness effort; enable measurement of progress and corrective management action; constitute the basis for detailed work and time plans; promote transparency; increase accountability; add to the basis for evaluation; and offer measurable outputs in return for the resources invested. The paper discusses each benefit and some practical problems arising from the use of targets, illustrating the discussion where possible with examples from real experience. The next section addresses regional and sectoral targets, leading to a short statement on how targets might be relevant to the partner states. A discussion follows of the requirements for the effective introduction and use of targets and suggestions as to how states might proceed if not all those requirements are in place. The paper ends with a passage on conclusions and some proposals for possible future work. Appendixes include country reports that report on the country's vocational education and training system. These countries are included: Australia; France; Hungary; Poland; Romania; Singapore; United Kingdom; and United States. (Contains 19 references.) (YLB)

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European Training Foundation

Subgroup A

THE SETTING UP OF NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND SECTOR TARGETS AS A TOOL FOR REFORMING THE SYSTEM

Torino, 23 and 24 May 1997

(Prepared by S. Loveman)

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THE SETTING UP OF NATIONAL REGIONAL AND SECTORAL TARGETS AS A TOOL FOR REFORMING THE SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

1. In 1996, two Subgroups of the European Training Foundation's Advisory Forum identified target setting as a tool which might be of general use in strategies for reform. The specific subject of this paper arose from Subgroup A's discussion of its paper *Financing Vocational Education and Training*[1]. Subgroup D, which dealt with the *Roles and Responsibilities of key players within continuing training*, also suggested target setting as a topic for further examination[2]. Broadly speaking Subgroup A was attracted by the potential of Targets as a means for winning resource and using it effectively. Subgroup D was interested in Targets as a tool for marshalling the efforts of the different parties in the more diffuse Vocational Education and Training systems which tend to develop in free labour markets. The origins of this paper lie in those two discussions.

ABOUT THIS PAPER

2. This paper aims to give Partner States material which will help them assess the potential value of targets as a tool for reform. It begins with a definition of terms and a brief statement of the potential benefits of target setting. It goes on to discuss each of those benefits and some of the practical problems arising from the use of targets, illustrating the discussion where possible with examples from real experience. There is then a section on regional and sectoral targets, leading to a short statement of how targets might be relevant to the Partner States. This is followed by a discussion of the requirements for the effective introduction and use of targets and suggestions as to how States might proceed if not all those requirements are in place. The paper ends with a passage on conclusions and some proposals for possible future work.

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1 Subgroup A: Financing Vocational Education and Training. A Report commissioned by the European Training Foundation. Vladimir Gasskov. European Training Foundation 1996.

2 Subgroup D: Continuing Training. The Roles and Responsibilities of key players within continuing training (including Management training) Ann Jones. European Training Foundation 1996.

3. There is a general shortage of material about the application of targets to Vocational Education and Training. This paper draws heavily on the examples of Australia, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States and to a lesser extent on those of France, Hungary, Poland and Romania (for which less material is available). Each of these examples is both referred to in the main text and described at more length in an Annex. The Annexes not only set out the targets adopted by these States but, where it is available, give some detail about such things as subordinate measures, performance indicators and reports of progress. This detail is merely to illustrate the sorts of apparatus which States have developed to help them deliver their targets. The brief descriptions of administrative machinery are similarly illustrative. These illustrations are intended to convey a sense of what is involved in introducing and managing targets - grasping the detail is not essential.

4. Ideally the paper should have contained more examples, particularly European and especially from the Partner States. There are however probably few such examples. The replies received to the questionnaire sent to Subgroup A members, to National Observatories and to some colleagues in the European Training Foundation suggest that quantified Vocational Education and Training targets are not in fact widely in use.

5. In addition to the footnotes which appear on pages where sources are cited there is a bibliography at Annex 9.

6. Readers are advised that much of the comment in this paper on the practical application of Vocational Education and Training targets is based on the author's personal experience of working with the United Kingdom's National Targets and of the day to day management of Work and Time Plans (see definition of terms, immediately following).

DEFINITION OF TERMS

7. **A necessary first step in considering whether and how targets may be useful in reforming Vocational Education and Training systems is to define what a Target is.** This requires a wider definition of terms in order to place Targets in their proper context.

8. Although the following terms are all in common use they are rarely defined. Different people use them in different ways. Most people use them to some extent interchangeably. Any attempt to define them is thus likely to provoke debate. It is therefore worth emphasising that the following definitions attached are solely to serve the immediate purpose of enabling a consistent discussion of the role and value of Targets:

   - **Aim** - the final outcome that you want to achieve: for example "To have a competitive workforce which will attract inward investment";

- **Objective** - an outcome which will contribute to achieving your Aim: for example "To ensure, so far as is practicable, that all school leavers have the core skills needed to begin work successfully and to continue learning";
- **Priority** - the most important of your objectives;
- **Policy** - the means by which you intend to achieve an objective: for example "To introduce curricula which develop the core skills of school pupils and to train teachers in their delivery";
- **Target** - a concrete expression of an intended outcome (i.e. of an Aim or Objective). This can be expressed in a variety of ways:
  - **improvements on a baseline**. For example "To make annual increases in the number of school leavers achieving at least a satisfactory mark in a standard assessment of their core skills" (This is the least demanding approach. The size of the improvements is not specified and there is no time scale);
  - **progress towards a declared target**. This might be an absolute number or a percentage - for example "To increase the number of young people obtaining a satisfactory mark in a standard assessment of their core skills until it is 100,000 per year/ until it is 90% per year". (This is more challenging since there is a clear end point and any continuing shortfall from it can be calculated and criticised);
  - **progress toward a declared target within a time frame**. For example "By December 1999 to have 90% of school leavers achieving at least a satisfactory mark in a standard assessment of their core skills". (This is the most demanding formulation. In the year 2000 it will be evident whether you have succeeded or failed);
  - **at national level** - a Target applying to the whole State ;
  - **at regional level** - Targets applying to a State's constituent regions or, in a federal State, to its constituent states;
  - **at sector level** - a Target applying to a particular industrial sector, for example to the glass industry;
- **Work and Time Plan** - the detailed plan for achieving a Target: who is going to do what by which date and with what resources;
- **Strategy** - all those things you do to achieve your Aim over the medium to long term - the development of the Aim itself, the identification of Objectives, the development and implementation of Policies, the setting of Targets.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TARGET SETTING

9. Target setting is a potentially powerful tool for change because it is a **commitment to measurable progress**. As such it can:

- provide a focus for planning and action;
- test the realism of Aims and Objectives;
- motivate people to improve performance;
- harness effort;
- enable measurement of progress and corrective management action;
- constitute the basis for detailed Work and Time Plans;
- promote transparency;
- increase accountability;
- add to the basis for evaluation;
- offer measurable outputs in return for the resources invested.

DISCUSSION OF BENEFITS AND PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

a) Providing a focus for planning and action

10. **Translating Aims and Objectives into concrete Targets provides a clear focus for marshalling the efforts of different parts of a Vocational Education and Training system.** Such systems are typically complex. At the level of national government they may involve more than one, sometimes several, Ministries. Within the public sector they typically engage a wide range of institutions. In free enterprise economies an important component is contributed by independent employers. Getting all these players to concentrate on and co-operate in achieving common Aims and Objectives is not easy. The clarity afforded by the concrete nature of Targets assists in creating the necessary joint understanding.

> *"Given the need for, and the opportunity to build, a qualified society it is imperative that there is a consensus between all those with an interest in education and training on where the [United Kingdom] needs to be. This is best achieved by agreeing to a set of world class targets for education and training. All the organisations listed in this report endorse the targets...."*[3]

11. As Annex 7 makes clear, the relative weakness of the United Kingdom's technical and vocational education was first diagnosed in the mid-nineteenth century and

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3 World Class Targets - a joint initiative to achieve Britain's skills revolution. Confederation of British Industry. 1991

remained a continuing cause for concern. Not until the 1990's however has there been a concerted attempt to tackle this weakness. This effort is centred on a set of National Targets for Education and Training launched in 1991 at the initiative of the country's large employers .While the ultimate success of these National Targets has still to be demonstrated they are clearly influencing all those parties involved in Vocational Education and Training as their originators intended. In particular they are helping to ensure that the parties are concentrating their efforts on the same outcomes and are taking opportunities to collaborate.

12. The development of the United Kingdom's National Targets involved extensive consultation; they were not launched until they clearly commanded strong support. It may indeed be counter-productive simply to announce a set of Targets. People who have not been consulted or whose views have been ignored may simply reject Targets which they feel are being imposed.

13. It may also be that the successful development of Targets depends to some extent on pre-existing common concerns. Thus the adoption of National Targets in the United Kingdom took advantage of and reinforced, rather than created, a general recognition that some new initiative was needed in Vocational Education and Training.

14. Although France does not have all-embracing National Targets equivalent to those adopted by the United Kingdom, the French Ministry of Education is using Targets to drive forward specific elements of national Vocational Education and Training performance (Annex 2). In developing its Target for apprenticeships the Ministry consulted extensively with the Social Partners and with the Regional Councils whose contributions will be critical to achieving the Target. It is not clear whether the Ministry undertook similar consultations in respect of the Targets to be delivered wholly by state-controlled institutions of education.

b) Testing the realism of Aims and Objectives

15. **In principle the setting of Targets should lead to a critical re-examination of the Aims and Objectives they support.** Are the concrete expressions of these Aims and Objectives really achievable in practice? If not perhaps progress towards them must be made more gradually, or perhaps the Aims and Objectives are themselves unrealistic and need modification.

16. The United Kingdom's overall Aim for Vocational Education and Training - "To improve the UK's international competitive position by raising standards and attainment levels in education and training to world class levels." - reflects an assessment of what it is likely to be able to achieve in practice. This is that the United Kingdom should be able to approach and possibly match but is not seeking to set the very best standards. Given the importance now being attached in the United Kingdom to the need for a well qualified workforce as a source of competitive strength a more ambitious Aim might perhaps have been agreed. It remains to be seen however whether the country's institutional arrangements are able to deliver this overall Aim.

c) *Motivating people to improve performance*

17. **People can be strongly motivated to improve performance by goals which are concrete, measurable and deliverable.** There is evidently strong motivation in Singapore towards the Government's overall Aim (which is also, in the terms of this paper, a Target) of matching the Swiss standard of living by the year 2020 or 2030 (see Annex 6).[4] This measurable goal, which the record of Singapore's economic performance suggests is attainable, is supported by Targets for Vocational Education and Training which are set following consultation with employers and educationalists and which provide specific motivation in the Vocational Education and Training sector.

18. **People whose special concern is not covered by a Target may however be demotivated.** Targets lose a lot of their power as a focus for effort if they are too numerous. If they are not relatively few in number people cannot grasp them, nor can managers give each of them the necessary attention. Inevitably therefore they can be applied only to some Objectives and not to others - and the application of Targets to these Objectives identifies them as Priorities. Because creating Targets clearly indicates Priorities it focuses interest on and motivates people towards the selected Objectives. At the same time it tends to demotivate people whose specific Objective is not translated into a recognised Target.

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4 Competitiveness Occasional Paper. The Skills Audit: A report from an Interdepartmental Group. Published by Department for Education and Employment and Cabinet Office 1996. Some of the material on Australia, France, the United Kingdom and the United States also comes from this paper.

This concern was illustrated when the United Kingdom's National Council for Education and Training Targets carried out a general consultation of about a revision of its National Targets:

> *"There was a concern in some responses that the proposed targets appeared to be rather exclusively orientated towards 'higher achievers'...Some respondents felt that this sent negative signals, and could have an adverse impact on ownership and acceptance of the Targets in some quarters."*[5]

19. The National Council felt that it would be wrong to increase the number of National Targets but urged all its partners to produce action plans which could include their own subordinate targets contributory to the overall Aim and Objectives.

20. **Arguably special care is needed in introducing Targets into Vocational Education and Training** since here their achievement turns upon the relationship between two sets of people - those who are learning and those who are helping them to learn. This relationship is complex - the success of each set of people depends upon the abilities, skills and motivations of the other. Because they depend upon their pupils, teachers are generally reluctant to be judged by others on their results and tend accordingly to be unsympathetic to Target setting.

21. A further cause for scepticism about Target setting in Vocational Education and Training is concern for the rights and interests of individual learners. Some of those elements of education and training which are difficult to measure are precisely those which relate to the personal development of learners. And those pupils who most need the support of the education and training system may have least to offer in terms of measurable results. Teachers, and others involved in the delivery of Vocational Education and Training, may therefore fear that increases in measurable outputs will be at the expense of individuals.

22. **A particular risk of setting numerical Targets is that people may concentrate their efforts wholly on achieving the numbers**. The numerical aspects of Targets are the easiest to measure and to report. They tend to be the prime focus of managerial and political interest. It is likely however that the numbers will not represent all that is truly wanted from the system:

- not everything can be measured but people may be motivated to deliver only what can be measured or what you have decided to measure. If you emphasise the number of examination passes will teachers still take time to inculcate good citizenship?
- Targets may encourage the delivery of quantity at the expense of quality. For example in the absence of agreed and externally assessed qualification

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5 Review of the National Targets for Education and Training. Report on the Outcomes of the Consultation to update the National Targets. National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets. 1995.

standards pupils may be awarded examination passes so as to achieve the numbers needed to meet a Target;

- people may concentrate on those activities which most easily achieve the Target. For example if a degree in Maths can be achieved more quickly and cheaply than a degree in Civil Engineering then Universities may produce disproportionate numbers of Maths graduates to meet a Target of increasing the number of young people with degrees;
- people may fiddle the figures. For example: to keep their bosses happy, to deal with unrealistic expectations, to protect their own agenda (which may not be covered by the official Targets) or to benefit from payment by results.

23. These problems arise in all sorts of organisations and political systems. A spectacular example occurred in China's "Great Leap Forward" when local communes were encouraged to compete in setting ambitious targets for the production of rice, rising to 40 times previous yields. Returns were falsified on a massive scale, deceiving the political leadership into believing that the problem of food production had been solved. Famine ensued.

24. Although the automatic response to devaluing Targets or actively falsifying performance may be to condemn the individuals directly concerned the problem may in fact arise from the way in which the Targets have been defined and managed. In a poorly controlled system in which it is possible for people to manipulate results individuals may well feel that others in the system will take advantage of its weaknesses. To guard against appearing to perform less well they will themselves manipulate results. This is particularly likely to happen where those reporting success are uncritically favoured and those reporting problems are readily criticised.

25. Those setting Targets for Vocational Education and Training need to be aware of these concerns and to take them into account in their development, presentation and management of Targets.

d) Harnessing effort

26. **Related to creating a focus for action and motivating people to improve performance, but meriting separate discussion, is harnessing the efforts of people who are outside the formal control of those who set the Targets.** Even in centralised States such as France, Singapore and the United Kingdom an important element of the Vocational Education and Training system - the activity of employers - falls outside the control of the national government. In States with strong regional or federal structures much of the public education and training infrastructure, even its Strategy, may not be under central direction. In these circumstances the promulgation of Targets may help create the elements of a national approach which would otherwise be lacking.

27. The clearest example of this use of Targets is in the United States of America where the Federal Government, which has no constitutional responsibility for education and training, is seeking to promote action by the individual states. To this end it is sponsoring, under the umbrella title Goals 2000, eight National Education Goals (see Annex 8). As is evident from the Annex, education and training arrangements in the United States are so highly decentralised, not to say fragmented, that promoting and measuring progress is extremely difficult. At present it appears that, while the Goals (and associated finance) are generating considerable activity in some states, efforts are patchy and overall the performance measures are not showing progress. There is of course resistance in the United States to federal government initiatives in general and Goals 2000 has been criticised as interventionist, bureaucratic and expensive.

28. Thus on the one hand:

> *"I can say directly that the current partnership between federal, state and local educational institutions gives me hope for major progress. A new balance is being forged with the focus on local communities and the other levels in support roles. It is the right balance. It recognises that no single level can succeed alone in providing the services needed for America's students. Partnerships are the model for a successful future."*[6]

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6 Bill Randall, Commissioner of Education in Colorado as quoted in The Goals 2000 Partnership. Goals 2000: A Progress Report - Fall 1996. From the Internet (gopher://gopher.ed.gov.10001/11/initiatives/goals/progpt/Fall 1996)

29. And on the other:

> *"I would object to Goals 2000 because:*
>
> *1) local schools will be extremely vulnerable to federal manipulation;*
>
> *2) would lose almost all its local autonomy;* (sic)
>
> *3) added bureaucracy at federal, state and local school districts;*
>
> *4) instil further centralisation;*
>
> *5) more federal coercion of the education system;*
>
> *6) further destruction of the basic curriculum;*
>
> *7) completely fails to empower parents;*
>
> *8) does not return power back to the states, districts or local schools."*[7]

30. Australia, another federal state, is also using Targets to promote national reform in Vocational Education and Training (see Annex 1). The constitutional relationship between the Commonwealth (i.e. federal government) of Australia and its States and Territories is much more tightly knit than that in the United States. Nevertheless, tensions exist between and among the Commonwealth and the States and Territories. To foster a national approach the relevant Ministers of the Commonwealth and of the States and Territories have agreed on two National Targets and are additionally monitoring various aspects of performance through a common set of indicators.

e) Enabling measurement of progress and corrective management action

31. **Expressing an Aim or Objective in measurable terms - i.e. as a Target - enables you to monitor your progress towards it and take any necessary corrective action.** This calls for careful analysis. Figures in themselves tell you only that there is a potential discrepancy to be investigated. Are the figures themselves correct? Who provided them? Who understands and is in contact with the parts of the system that appear to have failed to deliver? Is the explanation for the discrepancy credible? What remedial action will permanently improve performance? Because the achievement of main Targets depends upon the contribution of a range of supporting processes, States may identify an appropriate range of subsidiary performance measures (for examples see Annexes 1, 7 and 8). Even more specific and detailed, and vital for effective management, are supporting Work and Time Plans (see below paragraph 35).

32. **Singapore is reported to have a well-developed system of tracking progress with a willingness to take corrective action which extends to the provision of**

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7 My Case for Repeal of Goals 2000 by Senator Raymond N. Haynes of California. SchoolHouse Talk - Case for Repeal of Goals 2000. From the Internet (http://wworks.com/~pieinc/g-2000)

extra funds. The small size of the State, which enables close contacts between the centre and individual institutions, may make decisions about extra funding easier to take. It may also account for the apparent absence of blame in Singapore for institutions which fall short of their contribution to a Target - personal contacts encourage the development of trust and provide the opportunity to focus on correcting errors rather than seeking scapegoats.

33. **If you cannot measure your progress it is difficult to manage purposefully.** An indication of the importance attached to measurement is that Australia which originally had four National Targets dropped one of them because it was too difficult to measure and another partly because of measurement difficulties. In contrast, and despite the importance it attaches to measurement, the United Kingdom recently adopted a new National Target for which measurement will be distinctly imperfect. Two elements of the Target - competence in communication and numeracy - can be indirectly assessed through existing examinations in English and Mathematics; there is however currently no means of assessing the third, competence in Information Technology. On the face of it this was an odd decision. Since the United Kingdom has no baseline for the extent of competence in Information Technology and no means of measuring progress it cannot use the new Target to manage improvements in performance. The Target was in fact introduced in response to a strong demand expressed during general consultation about how the National Targets as a whole should be updated. The immediate action it has generated is a search for some means of measuring competence in Information Technology. This may ultimately lead to the introduction of a new standard assessment. The Target is therefore arguably serving as a focus for planning and action, directed towards its ultimate achievement.

34. This adoption of Targets as a precursor to and stimulus for measurement is a significant feature of Goals 2000 in the United States. Here the need to assess performance is part of the pressure for the creation of uniform standards of assessment by the individual states.

f) Constituting the basis for detailed Work and Time Plans

35. **The headline Targets provide the basis for detailed supporting Work and Time Plans.** Who is to do what, how and when and with what resources? These Work and Time Plans contain the intermediate targets which need to be met if the main Targets are to be hit. For example in the case of a Target "By December 1999 to have 90% of school leavers achieving at least a satisfactory mark in a standard assessment of their core skills" one would expect a Work and Time Plan for the delivery of a core skills curriculum. This would include a supporting work and time plan for the consultation on the curriculum's content; and this supporting plan would include a plan for the printing of the consultation document. Each of these plans would be working to a target.

g) Promoting transparency

36. **The adoption of Targets for Vocational Education and Training gives substance to Aims and Objectives and thereby opens them to scrutiny.** The setting of baselines and the measurement of change provide information about progress, as do the supporting performance measures normally adopted by States. Through these means the purposes and achievements of the Vocational Education and Training system become more transparent to those within Government - including Ministers of Education, Labour and Finance - to those working in Vocational Education and Training , to employers, to researchers and to the general public. This paper, for example, has drawn on reports of progress against Targets published in Australia[8], the United Kingdom[9] and the United States[10].

37. Within Government and the Vocational Education and Training system, Work and Time Plans provide a further source of transparency for those responsible for ensuring that Aims and Objectives are ultimately achieved.

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8 Annual National Report 1995. Australian National Training Authority. (3 volumes)

9 Skills for 2000. Report on Progress towards the National Education and Training Targets July 1996. National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets.

10 The National Education Goals Report. Building a Nation of Learners 1996. National Education Goals Panel.

h) Increasing accountability

38. **Targets and their supporting Work and Time Plans provide a structure within which accountability can be assigned for measurable achievements.** Being clear about who is accountable for what facilitates the day to day management of business. Holding people to account for measurable achievements helps to ensure the ready identification and investigation of departures from plan and makes clear who will be responsible for correcting shortfalls. It also contributes to motivation by identifying people's contribution to achievements. Accountability is the basis of sound delegation, which makes for the efficient use of resources.

    And in well developed management systems it can provide people with a degree of freedom to devise their own solutions to problems rather than simply working under direction.

39. In practice assigning clear cut responsibility for Vocational Education and Training Targets may be difficult since elements of the system may be controlled by different Ministries, by different tiers of government, by different institutions or by employers (see, for example, the Polish arrangements outlined at Annex 4). If there is no overall control, who can be accountable for the main Targets? If elements of the system are independent who can hold these elements accountable? It is these sorts of consideration which have led the United Kingdom Government to maintain that the United Kingdom's National Targets are a collective responsibility which is being addressed at the initiative of the representative body of large employers.

40. Although it may be difficult to be clear about accountability the process of analysis is still valuable. At worst it will identify problems: at best it may lead to solutions. For example splits of responsibility between Ministries may be overcome by co-operation or by adjustment of boundaries, independent organisations may be encouraged (perhaps with financial inducements) to voluntarily accept accountability. Growing recognition of the inter-relationship between education and training led the United Kingdom Government to merge its Ministries of Employment and Education in 1995. And although it does not accept formal responsibility for the country's National Targets the Government has nevertheless identified which parts of the Vocational Education and Training system have which contributions to make. Having made this analysis it manages, influences or encourages all parts of the system according to the extent of its authority over them.

41. In a democracy, transparency and accountability are two-edged weapons. They provide a platform for governments to promote their intentions and achievements and they facilitate those achievements. They also however spotlight areas for criticism particularly when they make clear that a government has failed to deliver. Targets can therefore be a source of embarrassment to governments. This in turn can reinforce the common managerial tendency to use accountability as a basis for blame.

42. Attributing blame is enjoyable but it is to be avoided. Most failures result from the circumstances under which people are working and not from their personal weaknesses (which in any case may be a result of failures by management, such as inadequate training). If the normal response to failure is the attribution of blame people will conceal failure, depriving management of the opportunity to take corrective action. (See the Great Leap Forward, paragraph 23 above).

i) Adding to the basis for evaluation

43. **The concrete nature of Targets adds to the basis for evaluating both Aims and Objectives and the Policies through which they are to have been achieved.** For example the Objective "To ensure, so far as is practicable, that all school leavers have the core skills needed to begin work successfully and to continue learning" is put into effect through the Policy "To introduce curricula which develop the core skills of school pupils and to train teachers in their delivery." Concrete expression is given to the Objective by the Target "By December 1999 to have 90% of school leavers achieving at least a satisfactory mark in a standard assessment of their core skills".

44. In the year 2000 the interaction of the Objective, Policy and Target can be examined retrospectively through a series of questions, for example:

- did we reach the Target? Whether or not we reached it what lessons can we learn from the process? How did we manage the introduction of curricula and of standard assessments? How did we provide for teacher training? What did we do successfully, what unsuccessfully? Which techniques, for example of consultation, did we use and which were most effective? How can we learn permanently from this experience?
- has the Target in fact delivered the Objective? Are employers satisfied with the core skills of the school leavers they have recruited? Are the school leavers displaying a capacity for and interest in continued learning?

- if not was this a failure of Policy? e.g. was it a mistake to attempt to inculcate core skills through the curriculum? Or was it a failure of execution? e.g. was the specification of core skills in the curriculum inappropriate to the needs of employers? Is the assessment of standards faulty?

j) Offering measurable outputs in return for the resources invested

45. **The adoption of Targets helps to demonstrate that Vocational Education and Training is an investment which yields outputs rather than merely a cost which consumes resources.** Concern about the continued treatment of Vocational Education as a cost is evident in the main lines of action at European level envisaged by the European Union White Paper on Education and Training for 1995[11]. These included a general objective to "treat capital investment and investment in training on an equal basis". The White Paper's commentary on this objective refers rather narrowly to employers' treatment of labour as a cost rather than an asset. It might equally well however have called for the treatment of training as an investment by governments and their finance departments. It does in fact touch obliquely on this theme elsewhere:

> *"The debate now in progress in member States on the public funds to be devoted to education and training is accompanied by an increased desire for greater transparency of the systems and above all for evaluation of the cost effectiveness of public expenditure in this field. The problem is to obtain reliable reference benchmarks." [emphases in the original]*

46. Paragraphs 20 and 21 above discussed the reservations which educationalists may have about applying Targets to Vocational Education and Training. The reluctance of governments and employers to treat Vocational Education and Training as an investment is the other side of this coin. How can it be an investment if it is centred on the needs of the individual and if it depends on the individual's co-operation? What are the outputs? And what is their relevance to the performance of the economy or the firm?

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11 European White Paper on Education and Training - Teaching and Learning - Towards the Learning Society. November 1995. COM(95) final.

47. Vocational Education and Training Targets go part of the way to answering these questions practically and presentationally. They offer governments the prospect of specific measurable outcomes for the resources which they invest, together with the ability to check progress at intermediate points against the subordinate targets included in Work and Time Plans. As discussed above at paragraphs 43 and 44 they contribute to the basis of evaluation, enabling Ministers and finance departments to examine how far Objectives have in fact been achieved. Their existence signifies the willingness of the Vocational Education and Training sector to submit itself to the financial disciplines and management techniques which are becoming the norm in other sectors. They make more possible and symbolise the tight and purposeful management necessary to get the most out of the resources available. In short they are of real value and help to confer respectability.

48. All governments are short of money and it would be unrealistic to suggest that setting Targets will undo their purse strings. Nevertheless where there is competition for funds Targets with outcomes which have a clear bearing on economic performance should help to protect Vocational Education and Training budgets.

NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND SECTORAL TARGETS

49. **Whether States set national, regional or sectoral Targets varies according to their size, organisation and constitutional arrangements:**

- Singapore, which is compact and highly centralised, operates at the national level. The small size of the State enables the Government to work closely not only with education and training institutions but with the key industrial sectors. It appears that its National Targets therefore incorporate Sector Targets;
- France which has historically exercised strong and detailed central control over its education system has adopted a number of specific National Targets embodied in law. It encourages employers to train through a reimbursable training levy but has seen no need to promote Targets for particular Sectors;
- The United Kingdom also has a strongly centralised national government and it has a well developed set of National Targets. It is however too large for its Government to have close relations with key employers. In order to promote training by employers it is stimulating them to develop voluntary Sector Targets;

- The Commonwealth of Australia, with a large territory but a relatively small population and a correspondingly small number of constituent States and Territories, has achieved close working relationships between the federal and state level. Despite tensions there is common agreement about Aims and Objectives and a shared and developing system of quantified Targets and performance measures;
- The Federal Government of the United States has adopted national Goals but essentially depends for the achievement of those Goals upon the voluntary co-operation of its highly independent States in setting their own Targets within the context of a relationship which is often adversarial.

50. **The essential requirements, as with other applications of Targets, are clarity and realism.** Adopting Targets at national, regional or sector level requires a clear and realistic analysis of the authority of each level, its capacity for action, its competence and its motivation.

51. Resistance by regional and sectoral tiers to Targets imposed by national authorities is probably an international trait. National authorities seeking to work through these tiers need therefore to take particular care over consultation, agreement and resourcing and to adjust their expectations accordingly. If as in the USA there is a highly independent state or regional structure it may be appropriate for Target setting to be a voluntary matter for the states/regions. If as in the UK the industrial sectors are too many and too large to have an intimate relationship with Government then again the setting of sectoral targets may appropriately be a voluntary matter. In such systems the regional/state and sectoral Targets are developed not by the national authorities but by the tier which has the real capacity for taking and carrying through decisions.

52. It is in fact arguable that where particular Targets can only in practice be delivered by regions or by sectors then either there should be no corresponding national Targets or the national Targets should consist simply of an aggregation of the regional or sectoral Targets. This may not feasible in practice - electorates may for example expect their national governments to take the lead irrespective of their true powers - but, if kept in mind as a principle, it might help in developing fruitful relationships between the national, regional and sectoral levels.

53. Some States may have or develop a regional tier which is purely administrative and has no separate electoral authority. This arrangement would enable the process of Target setting to be carried out partly at regional level. This would be particularly desirable where the regions were to be responsible for managing regional Targets or where the circumstances of regions were very different. It could be done in various ways. For example a national government could decide upon framework Targets which would apply to all regions but ask each region to consult about the numbers to be inserted in the framework - so some regions might end up going for 80% of a particular Target by the year 2000 and others for 90%. Or a government might ask each region to propose its own Targets, probably first for consideration by the government and then for consultation within each region, retaining the final authority to agree or amend whatever emerged from the consultation. It would probably choose to take the final decision on each set of

regional Targets itself. Arrangements on these lines would enable a State to take account of regional differences in setting its Targets. And they would have the advantage of taking the process of developing Targets closer to where they are to be managed.

THE RELEVANCE OF TARGET SETTING TO PARTNER STATES

54. **Most if not all Partner States are now reforming or considering reforming their Vocational Education and Training systems.** Their circumstances are of course diverse. They are of different sizes and have different administrative arrangements, they have different cultural traditions and expectations and they are at different stages of economic change and development. But they have in common a shortage of resources and, to a greater or lesser extent, a history of strong central control over their economies. The proponents of Vocational Education and Training in the Partner States therefore have some common needs:

- strong arguments to win their share of scarce government resources;
- ways of using their share of resources to the best possible effect;
- techniques for managing Vocational Education and Training systems which suit their developing free market economies.

55. Although these needs are common the diversity of the Partner States means that they face a variety of challenges. There is therefore no single Strategy for Vocational Education and Training reform which would be appropriate for every State - indeed it is important that each State should devise its own Strategy in the light of its particular circumstances. Though there is no single Strategy there may still however be particular tools or processes which would help the Partner States tackle their common needs and to which common consideration could be given.

56. As will be evident from the discussion so far, Target setting is potentially one of those common tools or techniques, bearing as it does on the justification of resources, on their effective use and on devolved and accountable management. **The great strength of Targets is that adopting them, if properly done, is a way into and part of a whole framework of purposeful political and managerial activity** - setting Aims and Objectives, deciding upon Policies, defining Targets, delegating responsibility to accountable people, organisations, sectors or tiers of government, producing Work and Time Plans, monitoring and reporting on progress, identifying departures from plan, taking corrective action, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of techniques and policies, keeping track of costs against progress, assessing the return on resources.

57. It appears that three Phare States have so far adopted Targets for Vocational Education and Training.

Hungary[12]

- to increase the percentage of those passing the baccalaureate or 'erettsegi' examination to 75-80% of an age cohort;
- to increase the percentage of those achieving a higher education diploma to 33% of an age cohort.

Poland[13]

- to reduce training in the basic vocational schools and to extend full secondary education (leading to the matriculation examination) to 80-85% of the secondary school population compared with the current 27%;
- to increase the size of the student population for people aged 20-24 to 33-35% of the total school population, compared to the current 20-22%.

Romania[14]

- to provide medium and high level specialised instruction, with a view to creating a critical mass of medium and highly qualified staff representing approximately 40% and 10% of those aged 15-22 and 19-24 respectively.

58. It is possible that these are not complete statements of the Targets. As stated they contain no dates by which the improvements are to be achieved and the governments may in fact have set unpublished dates or have separately announced dates which are not included in the Targets themselves.

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12 See Annex 3

13 See Annex 4

14 See Annex 5

59. It would be interesting to compare the practical experience of these three States with the claims made above for the relevance of Target setting to the Partner States as a whole - and with the discussion below of the requirements for introducing and using Targets. At present however there is a general shortage of supporting information. Available reports say nothing about how the Hungarian, Polish and Romanian Targets were arrived at, how they are being monitored, their impact and so on. Indeed the Targets do not appear to be given any great prominence by commentators who, when quoting them, do not always include the quantification which, from the perspective of this paper, gives them their special point. This apparent patchiness of treatment and lack of supporting detail may simply arise from difficulties in gathering information. Alternatively it may suggest that the countries concerned, or those reporting on them, do not at present regard their quantified Targets as being distinctively interesting or important.

60. Given the value attached by Partner States to learning from each other's experience it might be useful to gather and disseminate more information about the operation and effects of the Targets which have been adopted in Hungary, Poland and Romania.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTION AND USE OF TARGETS

61. States which are currently engaged with Vocational Education and Training Targets have found that they require **a capacity to consult**. The Singapore Government works closely with educational institutions and firms. The Australian Ministerial Council is advised by the Australian National Training Authority with representatives from employers and the Trades Union movement. The United States Federal Government has involved the states in the management of its Goals 2000 through the National Education Goals Panel. The United Kingdom has set up the National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets whose members include employers, educationalists and a representative of the Trades Unions. It is not clear whether France has set up specific consultative machinery but it has consulted the Social Partners and Regional Councils about its Target for apprenticeships; the great majority of European Union States would, as a matter of course, involve the Social Partners when taking any Vocational Education and Training initiative.

62. These sorts of representative machinery are typically supplemented by consultation exercises which seek a much wider range of opinion and support. These exercises should ideally identify at the outset all those who might contribute to or be affected by the proposed Targets and enable them to comment not just on their size and timing but on their scope. The skills required to conduct consultation are in the drafting and publication of consultative material, drawing up the distribution list, making an accurate and timely distribution, publicising the consultation exercise and making the consultative document available on request, receiving and analysing replies and producing a response which satisfies sufficient people without sacrificing clarity, realism and direction.

63. Setting and managing the Targets themselves requires **a basis of sound data** from which baselines can be established and progress measured. This calls for the definition of data, effective means for its collection, checks on its accuracy, means for its manipulation - usually nowadays through Information Technology - and for its interpretation. Designing systems for the collection and interpretation of data ideally involves collaboration between statisticians, experts in Information Technology, the managers of those who will provide the data and the managers who will act upon what the data suggests. There may be tension between statisticians, who are normally interested in what is right, and managers, who are normally interested in what is possible. If it can be controlled, this tension is helpful in producing systems and analyses which are both reasonably accurate and practicable.

64. Although Vocational Education and Training Targets can be concerned with matters such as the proportion of learners reaching a particular stage of education or training, States are almost certain to be interested in Targets to do with the numbers or proportions of learners achieving particular standards of performance. Part of the data base will therefore be **appropriate sets of recognised Vocational Education and Training standards with means for learners to be reliably assessed against those standards**. Creating standards is a matter for professionals in education and training covering as it does the design of curricula, means of assessing learners' performance and arrangements for inspection and moderation to ensure that standards are uniform.

65. Ideally performance against Targets should be examined not just through data collection but through **a system of evaluation** which considers the processes which are being used to achieve the Targets and whether the Targets are indeed delivering the Aims and Objectives. Evaluation is particularly valuable in checking that the quality of Vocational Education and Training is being sustained alongside the drive to achieve quantified Targets. While some evaluation can be undertaken by managers they may need the support of professional researchers for example in the design of questionnaires or of research projects.

66. Finally the effective introduction and use of Targets depends upon **a sufficiency of expert managers**. The role of managers within the political arrangements for Vocational Education and Training Targets is for example: to advise on the first proposals for Targets (will they deliver the Aims and Objectives? are they feasible? can they be monitored? can distortion and abuse be avoided?), to organise consultation and advise on its outcome, to establish accountability and

ensure the use of Work and Time Plans, to interpret progress reports and take appropriate action, to evaluate performance.

67. This role turns upon a good general understanding of management techniques coupled with a knowledge of the Vocational Education and Training system and an ability to work with professionals in the fields of education and training, statistics and research.

WHAT IF THESE REQUIREMENTS ARE NOT MET?

68. **Although there are dangers in embarking upon Vocational Education and Training Targets without the necessary underpinnings in place there are equally problems in seeking after perfection.** States have to start from where they are and their initial steps in any direction may well be imperfect. Provided States keep the shortcomings of their arrangements in mind they may find that beginning the process of Target setting helps them to develop the various capacities needed for the effective use of Targets. **Thus proposing or adopting a crude Target will encourage others to press for, devise and co-operate in developing a more sophisticated Target.** If for example a State's employers have not yet formed an adequate representative body reflecting their interest in training the proposed or actual adoption of a Target touching on that interest may stimulate them to do so. People who have no active interest in or are opposed to the concept of Targets may be provoked into interest by a proposal and, rather than accept what is proposed, may seek a Target which they find more appropriate. Provided the intention to consult is adequately publicised, consultation lists may write themselves as people ask to be consulted. Carrying out a consultation process is a good means of learning how it should be done, particularly if arrangements are made consciously to learn from the process.

69. Similarly **introducing Targets will lead to pressure for improved data collection** as people identify and complain about weaknesses in the accuracy and coverage of what is already collected. With the development of the National Observatories, the Partner States are of course already putting in place data bases on which they might draw if they wished to introduce Vocational Education and Training Targets, with main data covering access to and participation in Vocational Education and Training, outcomes, expenditure and labour market trends. Arguably Targets would not only draw upon but reinforce the work of the Observatories.

70. **Concern that Targets will lead to an over-emphasis on quantitative results will bring demands for greater attention to quality,** often in circumstances where quality has previously been taken for granted and therefore never assessed. This will stimulate new systems of evaluation.

71. There are of course wider arguments for the introduction of common standards into Vocational Education and Training but **to propose or adopt Targets based upon common standards will reinforce efforts to see that they are introduced.** In particular Targets will focus interest on the timetable for the development of

standards and on arrangements to ensure that the quality of the standard will not be debased by the quantitative aspects of Targeting.

72. Provided that they have access to advice and support, working towards Targets will provide a useful discipline for managers and help them acquire and apply the techniques of performance management and improvement. The promotion of managerial skills is a feature of the European Union's Leonardo programme and the bilateral arrangements between European Union and Partner States might also offer scope for help in this area.

CONCLUSIONS

73. Target setting is a powerful tool for reform, particularly for engendering action. It is clearly relevant to the challenges which Partner States face in reforming their Vocational Education and Training systems and they may therefore want to give it serious consideration.

74. In doing so they will want to bear in mind that Targets, like other powerful tools, are dangerous if misused - their strength in motivating and directing effort can be damaging if they are wrongly set or poorly monitored. Special care is called for in applying them to Vocational Education and Training where they will affect the relationships between learners and teachers and also the way in which the system treats individuals. These cautionary notes need not deter States from adopting Targets but they argue for care in their introduction.

75. It is perhaps misleading to talk simply of Target setting since Targets need to function within an overall framework of Aims, Objectives, Policies and Work and Time Plans. These therefore have to be set in place and managed along with the Targets themselves.

76. Apart from its direct value to the individual reform programmes of Partner States the financial disciplines attached to Target setting and the scope it provides for transparency and evaluation fit well with the European Union's developing thinking on Vocational Education and Training. Target setting might therefore have some part to play in Partner States' preparations for accession.

77. Given the evident potential of Target setting the European Training Foundation may want to consider engaging in some further work on how Targets might contribute to the Vocational Education and Training reforms which Partner States are already undertaking or are contemplating.

POSSIBLE FURTHER WORK BY THE EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION

78. Possibilities for further work are:

zzz) selected National Observatories might work with their Governments and the European Training Foundation on the development of Targets;

aaaa) selected Partner States might work with Subgroup A to produce 2 or 3 specific case studies for the 1998 Advisory Forum;

bbbb) Subgroup A might prepare a paper on the use of Targets in helping the Partner States develop their Vocational Education and Training systems in ways which will be beneficial when they achieve accession to the European Union;

cccc) Subgroup A might explore ways in which Leonardo could help Partner States develop their capacity to set and manage Vocational Education and Training Targets.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA[15]

1. Australia is the world's sixth largest country in area but has a population of only about 18 million people some 85% of whom live in cities. It has three main levels of government - a federal Parliament which is responsible for the Commonwealth as a whole, 8 States and Territories with their own Premiers and supporting Ministers, and small local authorities with elected councillors.

2. The Australian national Vocational Education and Training system is a co-operative arrangement between the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, industry and Industry Training Advisory Bodies, private and public training providers and other stakeholders. So far as governmental expenditure is concerned the Commonwealth raises the vast majority, retaining 30% for its own direct use and making 70% available to the States and Territories for use at their discretion.

3. The national strategic direction and co-ordination of this system is provided by the Australian National Training Authority set up in 1992 with the joint agreement of the Commonwealth and the States and Territories. The Authority has a strong input from industry - its Chairman is an industrialist, its Deputy Chairman is from the Trades Union movement and it has three ordinary board members who are managing directors from industry. The Authority reports to a Ministerial Council led by the Commonwealth Minister for Employment Education and Training with the relevant Ministers from each of the States and Territories.

4. The Australian education and training system is undergoing substantial reform, aimed to make it more flexible, more responsive to the skill needs of the country and more cost effective.

NATIONAL STRATEGY

5. The National Strategy is developed around **four main themes**:

   - **responsiveness** - to maximise diversity choice and co-operation between all the training providers, public, private and industry;
   - **quality** - to support those achieving the highest standards and give others the incentive to reach those standards;
   - **accessibility** - so that all Australians who want and need training can get it;
   - **efficiency** - to emphasise value for money and accountability and simplify administration.

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15 This Annex is drawn largely from Annual National Report 1995. Australian National Training Authority (3 volumes).

6. These main themes support a **general aim** of achieving a world-class training system responsive to all clients and their training needs.

7. The Commonwealth and States and Territories governments have by agreement adopted **two national targets**:

   8) By 2001, 95% of 19 year olds:

      - are participating in Year 12, or
      - have completed Year 12, or
      - have completed Years 10 or 11 and are participating in some formally recognised education and training, or
      - have completed Year 10 or 11 and have completed some formally recognised education and training.

   9) By 2001, 60% of 22 year olds:

      - are participating in education and training programs which lead to level 3 awards, or
      - have attained level 3 qualifications, or
      - are participating in, or have completed, higher education studies such as degrees and diplomas.

10. In 1995 Australia was on course to achieve both these targets.

11. Originally four targets were proposed. Ministers decided however to drop two of them; one because the qualifications necessary for its measurement would not be in place over the necessary time scale, another because it was difficult to measure and could be adequately covered by one of the two targets which were retained.

12. In addition to the two national targets, Australia is developing a set of key **performance measures**, for example:

    - what proportion of graduates from Technical and Further Education courses: get jobs? go on to further study? achieve their main aim in taking the course? can take their course without leaving home?
    - how satisfied are employers: with graduates from Technical and Further Education courses? with graduates from private training organisations? with graduates who finished training before starting their current job? with graduates who finished training after completing their current job?

FRANCE[16]

1. France, with a total population of around 58 million in 1995 and working population of some 25 million in 1993, has a history of strongly centralised administration including detailed national control over its education and training system. Since the mid-1980s it has combined this tradition of central leadership with a degree of decentralised administration.

2. The process of decentralisation was initiated by the Laws of 1982/83 on Decentralisation which effectively made Regional Councils responsible for financing and organising professional training by the apprenticeship route.

3. In parallel with this the national government introduced a series of national Vocational Education and Training Targets, reflecting its view that education and training will be vital to the country's future economic performance:

   - In 1985 the Loi Programme sur l'Enseignement technique et professionnel set a Target of bringing 80% of the relevant age group to Baccalaureate level by the year 2000. In 1987 this Target was reduced to 74%. The reasons for the reduction are not clear - presumably it indicated a revision either in the forecast requirement for qualified young people or in what was thought to be achievable.
   - In 1989 the Loi d'orientation sur l'Education set a Target that 100% of young people should achieve at least French level V (equivalent to international level I). This is the first level of professional qualification and corresponds to the Certificate d'aptitude professionnelle or to the Brevet d'étude professionnelle.
   - In 1993 the Programme d'action gouvernemental set a Target to double the number of apprentices by the year 2000 (from a base of 215,000 in 1993/94). Apprenticeship can in principle lead to any level of qualification but the governmental programme is aimed particularly at the Certificate d'aptitude professionnelle/Brevet d'étude professionnelle.

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16 This Annex is based partly on the Competitiveness Occasional Paper (paragraphs 1 and 5) and partly on information supplied by the European Training Foundation (paragraphs 2 to 4).

4. It is not clear how far the national government consulted interested parties before adopting the Targets of 1985 (revised 1987) and of 1989. There was however extensive consultation over the Target for apprenticeships adopted in 1993 both with the Social Partners and with the Regional Councils. Discussion with the Social Partners will have been essential since the apprenticeship system involves trainees alternating between work based training and apprentice training centres, many of which are run by employers' organisations - Chambers of Trade and Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The need to consult with the Regional Councils arises from the process of decentralisation referred to at paragraph 2 above.

5. Information about progress against the Targets is limited. There has however been substantial growth in the number of qualifications awarded. Between 1985 and 1994 the number of Baccalaureates awarded rose from 253,000 to 459,000 and the number of Brevets d'étude professionnelle from 112,000 to 184,000. There was a fall in the number of Certificates d'aptitude professionnelle from 273,000 to 248,000 but since the Certificate is an older and narrower qualification than the Brevet this fall was in line with broad government policy. In total the number of awards at this first level of professional qualification rose from 385,000 to 432,000.

HUNGARY

1. In 1995 Hungary had a population of some 10.5 million, with its working population in the early 1990s standing at some 5.5 million.

2. The European Training Foundation reports that Hungary places a high priority on human resources as part of its strategy for integration to the European Union and that its modernisation programme gives as much weight to human resource development as it does to improving physical infrastructures. It has progressed as far as any Phare partner in defining strategies to align its Vocational Training system with emerging training needs and has also advanced in establishing an institutional framework for Vocational Education and Training provision.[17]

3. At national level:

   - the Ministry of Education is responsible for the structure of schools, for the compulsory timetable and for examinations in general subjects;
   - the Ministry of Labour is responsible for technical subjects except for agriculture and health for which the respective policy Ministries are responsible;
   - the National Vocational Training Council which involves the Social Partners and local government acts as a consultative body for the Ministry of Labour.

4. At regional level Country Labour Councils distribute Vocational Education and Training resources.

5. At sector level Branch ministries remain responsible for organising the development of curricula and examinations according to the National Register of Vocational Qualifications.

6. Hungary has set out its strategic objectives for Vocational Training in Resolution 2015/1996:

   - to provide everyone with the opportunity to obtain an appropriate qualification in order to increase the chances of getting a job;
   - to develop and maintain internationally competitive professional skills for the population - to be achieved by tracking and forecasting the changing needs of the economy;
   - to increase the involvement of the private sector in schools, for both the teaching of basic vocational knowledge and specialised vocational training;

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17 Vocational Education and Training Reform in Hungary. European Training Foundation Working Document. December 1996 (also the source of paragraphs 6 and 7 of this Annex).

- to ensure cost efficiency and the rationalisation of state participation in financing training;
- to create the conditions for the continuous training of adults, including both employed and unemployed; and
- to harmonise statistical and information systems with international, European classification systems.

7. The Government has also adopted a number of specific education and training objectives:

- to increase the percentage of those passing the baccalaureate examination to 75%-80% of an age cohort;
- to increase the percentage of those achieving a higher education diploma to 33% of an age cohort;
- to keep career choice options open for young people by raising the age for starting vocational education and training to 16 years;
- to provide free vocational training up to the level of the first qualification;
- to continuously modernise the content and methodology of education and training;
- to apply positive discrimination concerning the education of the ethnic and national minorities;
- to enhance vocational qualification requirements in order to achieve European recognition; to update the training of teachers.

POLAND

1. In 1996 Poland had a population of around 39 million with some 15 million in its working population.

2. The European Training Foundation reports that investment in human resources is officially acknowledged to be central to Poland's national strategy for economic transformation and accession to the European Union. More education and training programmes have been developed in Poland with the assistance of Phare than in any other CEEC country. Nevertheless the Foundation comments that in spite of significant individual programmes much needs to be done to reform the Vocational Education and Training system as a whole and that the Ministry of National Education accords only a low priority to Vocational Education and Training.[18]

3. In its own very full report from which the remainder of this Annex is drawn[19] the Polish National Observatory provides a detailed description of the Polish economy and of the workings of its education and training system.

4. The Polish Vocational Education and Training system:

   - is highly centralised;
   - disperses responsibility widely among a number of central authorities;
   - has a complex division of power between the central agencies and the provincial offices of the Ministry of National Education;
   - lacks systematic involvement of the Social Partners;
   - separates the subsystems of vocational education (initial, further, re-training);
   - has an almost no infrastructure of monitoring, evaluation and research.

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18 Vocational Education and Training Reform in Poland. European Training Foundation Working Document. December 1996.

19 Poland. National Report First Draft. Polish National Observatory Team. October 1996.

5. The Ministry of National Education co-ordinates and carries out overall policy, lays down general educational curricula, determines the hours devoted to particular subjects (e.g. general education, general professional and specialist professional) approves the curricula for individual professions (prepared by relevant Ministries) and liaises with other Ministries and with schools in curriculum development.

6. Other responsible Ministries are:

- Culture and Art - schools of art;
- Health and Social Welfare - medical schools;
- Agriculture and Food Economy - agricultural schools;
- Other technical Ministries (Finance, Construction, Industry etc.) - responsible for defining the curricula for particular professions and specialisations;
- Labour and Social Policy - managing the retraining of unemployed people.

7. At the intermediary level the provincial offices of the Ministry of National Education provide:

- pedagogical supervision (control over teaching programmes, evaluation of the quality of the work of individual teachers);
- organisation of training for teachers in public (i.e. state) schools;
- registration and licensing of non-public institutions of education.

8. In 1991 and 1995 elements of decentralisation were introduced:

- transferring control over part of the vocational schools to local authorities;
- giving vocational school directors more power to vary the subjects taught to meet the needs of local labour markets, in co-ordination with the provincial education offices and local labour offices;
- giving the provincial offices control over continuing education, previously held centrally by the Ministry of National Education;
- giving heads of schools more financial autonomy.

9. The main strategic objectives in reforming the Polish Vocational Education and Training system are currently:

- to reduce training in the basic vocational schools and to extend full secondary education (leading to the matriculation examination) to 80-85% of the secondary school population compared with the current 27%;
- to increase the size of the student population to 33-35% of people aged 20-24 compared to the current 20-22%;

- to diversify and expand post-matriculation training opportunities through the introduction of professional post-secondary institutions offering licence degrees;
- to develop lifelong learning to provide training and retraining to all age groups.

10. The main problems in carrying through the reform process are thought to be:

- a lack of political stability with frequent changes of administration;
- budget difficulties;
- the absence of well developed strategies with respect to the organisation and management of education and training under the new economic conditions;
- the complicated and opaque system of administration.

ROMANIA[20]

1. Romania's population in 1995 was around 23.5 million and in the early 1990s its workforce was just below 11 million. It is situated at the confluence of two major zones of interest, on the one hand influenced by central Europe, principally Germany, and on the other hand by Eastern interests, principally Russia and the Ukraine. It is furthermore close to the turbulent Balkan zone. At the same time , it sits on two new axes of communications, the Danube and the Black Sea, creating major new opportunities for regional co-operation.

2. The Ministry of Education is responsible for National Education Policy and Programmes. There are periodic consultations between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, other ministries, agencies and the social partners. The Ministry of Education also receives significant support in the shape of projects, analysis and proposals for educational reform from the independent Institute for Educational Sciences.

3. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection is responsible for labour market legislation, strategies and policies and for the implementation of legal provisions in conjunction with a National Agency for Employment and Vocational Training (to be created) 270 regional and local labour offices and, in the future, regional and local agencies for employment and vocational training and 14 regional centres for the training and re-training of unemployed people.

4. The Romanian education and training system is undergoing important reform, aimed to make it more flexible and more responsive to the skill needs of the market economy. Its long term national strategy is developed around four main objectives:

   - providing a basic education for young people up to age 16;
   - providing medium and high level specialised instruction, with a view to creating a critical mass of medium and highly qualified staff representing approximately 40% and 10% of those aged 15-22 and 19-24 respectively;
   - providing continuing education for the whole adult population, especially those between the ages of 20 and 50, by establishing modules of basic and vocational education over varying periods of time
   - organising compensatory (or 'second chance') education intended for those adults who could not benefit from a proper basic education.

5. The reform of Vocational Education and Training in Romania has been elaborated and carried out within an economic, political, social and cultural framework marked by strong contradictions and challenges. The main characteristics of this continuously changing background are, politically, the transition from a

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20 This Annex is based very closely on material supplied by the Romanian Ministry of Education.

totalitarian to a democratic regime and, economically, the movement from an administratively bureaucratic and highly centralised command economy to a market economy. The transition to the market economy has a major impact upon the structure, contents and functioning of the system of Vocational Education and Training, giving rise to a range of policies and actions, including creating links with basic education, opening schools to the world of labour, the continuous training of the active population and strengthening the European dimension.

6. The transition to an open democratic society is dependent on the comprehensive development of qualifications for the country's entire population. The present situation is characterised by an enormous difference between actual training requirements and the real capacity to meet them. The reform of the Vocational Education and Training system is an important component of the transition . It has a systemic and global character encompassing pre-university, university and post-university education and scientific research.

7. The main targets of educational policy seen from the angle of lasting human development considered as a precondition for further economic growth and integration with the European Union are:

- providing initial training and the improvement of human resources;
- gradually opening the system to new experience, reorganising the structure of the educational system, initiating and stimulating modern, flexible, legal initiatives;
- improving the quality of management at all levels of the education system;
- monitoring developments in schools by comparison with changes in the labour market, with the aspirations of the population, with demographic evolution and/or with the real limits of school capacity.

SINGAPORE

1. Singapore is a republic with a population of about 3 million and an area of about 620 square kilometres. Its industrialisation has taken place largely since 1960. The Government, though subject to five yearly elections, has remained unchanged over that time. It has pursued a strongly interventionist economic development strategy. Its economy has averaged over 8% growth per year over the last 35 years. Its Gross National Product per head is now estimated to be greater than that of France, Germany and the United Kingdom. It announced in 1991 an overall goal of matching the Swiss standard of living by 2020.

2. The Government believes that the key to continuing economic success is the progressive development of a high technology, high value added economy. It specifically seeks to identify industrial and commercial sectors with competitive potential and to support their development.

3. The Mission Statement of the Singapore Department of Education emphasises the importance of developing young people as fully rounded citizens. Nevertheless the economic importance of education and training is fully recognised. The opening sentence of the Statement reads "The wealth of a nation lies in its people - their commitment to country and community, their willingness to strive and persevere, their ability to think, achieve and excel." This is consistent with the Government's use of education and training as an economic tool towards its overall goal.

4. The outputs of the universities, polytechnics and Institutes of Technical Education* are largely determined by national economic objectives. Through a broad based information strategy the Government compares the future human resource requirements of the economy with the projected outputs of these institutions. The Government through the Council for Professional and Technical Education (formed in 1979) then agrees approximate targets for the numbers of graduates expected from these institutions and any institutional changes needed.

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* Institutes of Technical Education provide school leavers with Vocational Training either full-time or through an apprenticeship.

5. The universities, polytechnics and Institutes of Technical Education are expected by 2000 to be achieving the goal of 25% of the age cohort in university education, 40% in polytechnics and 25% in Institutes of Technical Education. 10% are expected to go on to other career destinations[21].

6. From discussions with people who have visited Singapore it appears that the institutional changes referred to in paragraph 4 above extend to the provision of necessary extra resources. And although as a result of this overall process all education and training institutions have Targets to meet failure to meet them does not necessarily lead to blame. There seems to be an assumption that college principals and other responsible people will do their best.

7. Close working between the Government, Education and Business is facilitated by the small size of the state, the long period of stable government and the high proportion of scientists, engineers and people with business experience within the government machine. It is further assisted by the population's strong sense of working for the common good.

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21 Paragraphs 4 and 5 of this Annex are taken verbatim from: Competitiveness Occasional Paper. The Skills Audit: A report from an Interdepartmental Group. Published by Department for Education and Employment and Cabinet Office 1996.

THE UNITED KINGDOM

1. The United Kingdom is **a centralised state** with a population of around 58 million in 1995 and a working population of some 28 million in the early 1990s. It has no regional tier and its elected local government tier holds its powers entirely at the discretion of the national government.

2. Nevertheless for many years the national government exercised relatively loose control over the education and training system, establishing only a broad legal framework and leaving the administration to locally elected education authorities. Academic education was culturally held in greater respect than vocational education and the training of people for work was unregulated and largely left to employers.

3. This was despite **long standing concern about the country's relative weakness in technical and vocational education and training**. As early as 1851, when the United Kingdom was the world's foremost commercial and industrial power, concern was expressed that its leading position was coming under threat and that this weakness was a contributory factor. At roughly ten year intervals thereafter reports were produced which repeated this diagnosis and called for action. Despite the reports the relative weakness continued, accompanied by a relative decline in the country's economic performance.

4. In 1989 the Confederation of British Industry, representing the country's large employers, reported :

> *"Despite annual employer expenditure of over £18 billion and recent important initiatives in the education field our skill levels are lower than those of our competitors and the gap may be widening. Action is urgently required."*[22]

5. Following further work the Confederation launched in 1991 a set of National Education and Training Targets which the Secretary of State for Employment welcomed and supported on behalf of the Government. The Targets were also endorsed by organisations representing the smaller employers, the Trades Unions, local authorities, professional educationalists and so on.

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22 Towards a Skills Revolution. Confederation of British Industry 1989

6. In 1993 Government set up an **independent National Advisory Council on Education and Training Targets**. Its members are drawn from senior people working in business and education and from a number of national bodies involved in education and training (for example the chairman of the body responsible for reforming vocational qualifications). The chief official of the national representative body of the Trades Unions is also a member.

7. The Council's role is to monitor and report on progress towards the Targets; advise Government on performance and policies which influence progress; and provide business leadership in raising skill levels and increasing employer commitment to the Targets. The Council published reports on progress towards the Targets in March 1993[23] and February 1994[24]. And in May 1995, following extensive consultation it proposed that the Targets should be updated and expanded[25].

8. **The UK's National Targets for Education and Training are currently:**

Aim

To improve the UK's international competitive position by raising standards and attainment levels in education and training to world class levels through ensuring that:

1) All employers invest in employee development to achieve business success.

2) All individuals have access to education and training opportunities, leading to recognised qualifications, which meet their needs and aspirations.

3) All education and training develops self-reliance, flexibility and breadth, in particular through fostering competence in core skills.

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23 The First Annual Report on Progress towards the National Education and Training Targets. National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets. 1993

24 National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets. Report on Progress. 1994

25 Review of the National Targets for Education and Training. Report on the Outcomes of the Consultation to update the National Targets. National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets. 1995.

Targets for 2000

Foundation learning

1) By age 19, 85% of young people to achieve 5 General Certificates of Education at grade C or above, an Intermediate General National Vocational Qualification or a National Vocational Qualification level 2.

2) 75% of young people to achieve level 2 competence in communication, numeracy and Information Technology by age 19; and 35% to achieve level 3 competence in these core skills by age 21.

3) By age 21, 60% of young people to achieve 2 General Certificate of Education Advanced levels, an Advanced General National Vocational Qualification or a National Vocational Qualification level 3.

Lifetime learning

1) 60% of the workforce to be qualified to National Vocational Qualification level 3, Advanced General National Vocational Qualification or General Certificate of Education Advanced level standard.

2) 30% of the workforce to have a vocational, professional, management or academic qualification at National Vocational Qualification level 4 or above.

3) 70% of all organisations employing 200 or more employees , and 35% of those employing 50 or more, to be recognised as Investors in People.

4. The National Council has said it will monitor progress towards the Aim through a **range of measures and indicators**, for example:

Lifetime Learning Target 1. 60% of the workforce to be qualified to NVQ level 3 Advanced GNVQ or GCE A level standard

Headline Measure

Proportion of the workforce holding the required level of qualifications

Indicators

Progress by country, English region and gender

Progress by industry sector

Progress by type of qualification

Achievement by age bands

Number of National Vocational Qualifications level 3 and above awarded by level and area of competence

Achievement of target by the workforce including those actively seeking work

Achievement of National Vocational Qualifications level 1 and 2 and units of National Vocational Qualifications by the workforce.

10. More or less in parallel with the development of National Targets the Government has been reforming the education and training system, taking powers to specify the school curriculum, increasing its own influence and that of parents and school governors at the expense of the locally elected education authorities and introducing new standardised vocational qualifications. Though it supports and promotes the National Targets it has however resisted taking responsibility for them. There are three main reasons for this:

- the Targets originated with employers. This gives them greater credibility than if they were "Government Targets";
- the Government does not control all the necessary parts of the system. For example, employers must largely be responsible for achieving Lifetime Learning Target 1 through encouraging their workforces to become qualified;
- if they were Government Targets people would expect the Government to achieve them through increased expenditure. The former Conservative Government did not believe that extra government expenditure was the answer and governments are in any case concerned to keep down public spending.

11. The National Advisory Council on Education and Training Targets reported in 1996 on overall progress against the Targets[26]:

United Kingdom: **Performance against National Education and Training Targets as at July 1996**
Description Target Autumn Increase on Average annual rate for 1995 Autumn 94 rate of increase of increase 2.000 Position (% points) since Spring 91 required to (% points) reach target (% points)
Foundation Target 1 19 year olds with five GCSE's at Grade C or above 85% 67.5% 1.4 2.9 3.5 an intermediate GNVQ or an NVQ level 2

26 Skills for 2000. Report on Progress towards the National Education and Training Targets July 1996. National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets.

Foundation Target 2 19 year olds qualified to level 2 in communication, 75% ** ** ** ** numeracy and information technology 21 year olds qualified to level 3 in above skills 35% ** ** ** **
Foundation Target 3 21 year olds with 2 GCE A levels , an advanced 60% 44.4% 2.5 3.1 3.1 GNVQ or an NVQ level 3
Lifetime Target 1 Proportion of the workforce with NVQ level 3, 60% 40.9% 0.5 2.3 3.8 Advanced GNVQ or 2 GCE A levels
Lifetime Target 2 Proportion of the workforce with NVQ level 4 30% 23.9% 0.8 1.5 1.2 or above
Description Target March Increase on Average annual rate for 1996 March 95 rate of increase of increase 2.000 Position (% points) since Spring 91 required to (% points) reach target (% points)
Lifetime Target 3 Organisations with 200 or more staff, recognised 70% 11.4% 5.4 2.3 12.3 as Investors
Organisations with 50 or more staff, recognised 35% 4.6% Not 0.9 6.4 as Investors available

12. As indicated at paragraph 10 above a large part of the success of the United Kingdom's training effort depends upon employers. The Government therefore encouraged the creation of a set of voluntary Industry Training Organisations which promote training in particular industrial sectors, for example the Glass industry or the Clothing Industry. Recently it stimulated these Industry Training Organisations to contribute to the achievement of the National Targets by inviting them to bid for financial support for the development of Sector Targets for their industries - the Government is paying part of the development costs of the 10 best bidders. The intention is that the lessons learned by these 10 Industry Training Organisations will be of value to all Industry Training Organisations.

13. Because the 10 successful bidders were at different stages of development when they started work on their Sector Targets they are approaching them in different ways. For example:

- **The Glass Industry** with only 130 companies is using the concept of "champions" to set targets and implementation plans for each of its 10 sub-sectors. It has a champion for every geographical area and product type as an aid to sharing best practice;
- **The Construction Industry** with 1.4 million employees in 200,000 companies covering 40 distinct occupations is setting initial targets and testing them on companies in only one geographical area.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1. In 1995 the estimated population of the United States was around 263 million and in 1993 the working population stood at around 128 million.

2. The responsibility for Education in the United States rests principally with the States rather than with the Federal Government. There is no single national system of Education. The funding arrangements are complex - **schools** get money from Federal, State and Local taxation. Only about 6% of their income is Federal in origin. **Community Colleges and higher education** are matters for States and local communities. **Occupational and job specific skills training** are regarded as the responsibility of individuals and employers.

3. There have been long standing concerns about the performance of US schools[27] particularly in the area of basic and core skills. Despite the Federal Government's lack of control over the system - it has neither constitutional authority nor financial power - it has responded to concerns about the schools system by adopting the following eight National Education Goals which say that **by the year 2000:**

   - **Ready to learn** - All children in America will start school ready to learn;
   - **School completion** - The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent;
   - **Student achievement and citizenship** - All students will leave grades 4, 8 and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history and geography and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning and productive employment in our Nation's modern economy;
   - **Teacher education and professional development** - The Nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century;
   - **Mathematics and science** - United States students will be the first in the world in mathematics and science achievement;
   - **Adult literacy and lifelong learning** - Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship;

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27 A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform. A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of State for Education, United States Department of Education by The National Commission on Excellence in Education. 1983.

- **Safe, disciplined and alcohol and drug-free schools** - every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence and the unauthorised presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning;
- **Parental participation** - Every school will participate in partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional and academic growth of children.

4. These Goals are embodied in the **Goals 2000: Educate America Act**, signed in 1994 by President Clinton. This followed groundwork by President Bush and the State governors who first established national goals in 1990 and launched a grassroots State and local effort to meet them.

5. The Act recognises that education is a State and local responsibility but must also be a national priority. It provides direct support to State and local school improvement efforts:

   - encouraging each State to develop challenging academic standards for its students;
   - helping States and communities to build on and co-ordinate their existing reform efforts;
   - providing incentive grants for schools, communities and States to support their own effective approach to improve student achievement;
   - providing funds to States and school districts for better teacher training and professional development;
   - encouraging parents to get more involved in the education of their children;
   - promoting flexibility by providing authority for the Secretary of Education to waive certain regulations to assist states and local communities in implementing school improvements.

6. A **National Education Goals Panel**, originally set up in connection with the goals sponsored by President Bush, now monitors progress towards Goals 2000. It consists of eight State governors, four members of the Congress, four State legislators and two representatives of the Federal Administration, one of whom is the Secretary of State for Education. The Panel uses existing sources of data to measure progress towards the Goals and works with the providers of data to improve their relevance.

7. Measurement is hampered by the diverse approaches and priorities of States and by the absence of agreed academic standards, not just at national level but it seems also in many States and communities. Examples from two different States are:

- **Kentucky** appears to have a common basis for assessing student performance between schools and over time. It has given its schools greater autonomy and holds them accountable for performance. A new financing system has brought greater equity to the distribution of funds. It reports:
  - improvements in performance by 4th, 8th and 12th graders,
  - improved performance in mathematics, reading, science and social studies by students in all grades,
  - the percentage of 4th graders achieving proficiency/distinction in reading increased from 8% in 1993 to 30% in 1995;
- **Maryland** has designed and scored test items for grades 3,5 and 8 and assesses schools annually on student achievement in relation to the State's standards. It is developing curriculum frameworks to help teachers and administrators plan, develop and introduce local criteria and assessments that help in achieving State standards. Schools are creating school improvement teams of the school staff, parents and business and community members to develop and implement school improvement plans. It reports:
  - State assessment results for 1995 showed 52% more schools met or approached satisfactory standards at the 3rd grade than in 1994,
  - a 13% improvement at the 5th grade and 32% at the 8th grade,
  - State-wide, 40% of all students met the State standards, 25% up on 1993.

8. At national level the National Educational Goals Panel produces annual reports which discuss challenges, successes and setbacks and attempt an analysis of performance for the United States as a whole. For this purpose the Goals are assessed against 25 measures. In the case for example of Goal 1. Ready to Learn there are four measures:

- Children's Health Index: has the US reduced the percentage of infants born with one or more health risks?
- Immunisations: has the US increased the percentage of 2-year olds who have been fully immunised against preventable childhood diseases?
- Family-Child Reading and Storytelling: has the US increased the percentage of 3- to 5-year olds whose parents read to them or tell them stories regularly?
- Pre-school Participation: has the US reduced the gap in pre-school participation between 3- to5-year olds from high- and low-income families?

9. In 1996 the Goals panel reported that national performance had improved against five of these 25 measures and declined against eight (the remainder either being stable or not measured)[28].

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28 This and other figures from The National Education Goals Report. Building a Nation of Learners 1996. National Education Goals Panel.

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